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NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

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Dear Peter:

I am pleased to offer you my opinion on the nomenclature proposal. I have several points which I feel should be considered in developing a scheme.

(1) I agree with Peter Duesberg that names should not imply pathology. The same disease - erythroleukemia can be induced by AEV, Harvey virus, SFFV, and possibly E26. Therefore, I cannot see naming any single virus "erb".

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K-ras

(2) I must make you aware of some of our unpublished data. There are two rat endogenous genes homologous to the Harvey virus src gene. They are different from one another. In addition, the Kirsten p21 gene, although related, is quite distinct from either Harvey related gene. Rat sarcoma virus is related to Harvey. The nomenclature must take this into account. Something like the names for hemoglobin genes would seem most appropriate.

(3) I think the name should indicate the historical species of origin, but the gene I believe should not have this name. The genes are in all vertebrates.

(4) I think that the nomenclature must allow for surprises. Our knowledge of these genes is really quite embryonic and with new clones and new viruses, we might find some surprises.

Therefore, I must say I like Harriett Robinson's basic idea. Simply numbering the genes with a historical

prefix. This would leave room for alleles of they exist i.e. chon$_{1\alpha}$ $_{1\beta}$ $_{1\gamma}$

(5) I appreciate that there are many investigators who do not accept that SFFV is different. But a role for gp52 in this virus disease is much clearer than a role for other putative onc proteins. There may be other viruses like SFFV. Therefore, the nomenclature should allow for the designation of the SFFV onc and the numbering system would allow this.

(6) I think we as virologists should not be parochial in the names for onc genes. If we are lucky and other onc genes not yet part of viruses are discovered, they can be simply fit into Harriett's numbering proposal. I'm thinking of Weinberg's data on transfecting DNAs and hoping that some human cancers will be "caused" by onc genes like, but not identical to,viral onc genes. It would be nice for the field if our nomenclature allowed these onc genes to fit right into the scheme.

I hope this is helpful and does not stir up too much controversy. I look forward to your thoughts on my comments.

Best wishes,

Ed Scolnick

ES/ab